Journal of Applied Linguistics, Language Education, and Literature
1(1), 2026, 1-16

Teaching Currency Vocabulary to Young EFL Learners through a Digital Monopoly-Style Game: A Qualitative Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Digital games are increasingly used in English vocabulary instruction, yet less is known about how teachers mediate digital board games in lower-primary EFL classrooms. This qualitative single case study investigated the implementation of a digital Monopoly-style game for teaching currency-related vocabulary in one team-taught second-grade English classroom in Indonesia. The case involved three female English teachers and 22 students aged 8-9 years. Data were collected across six 70-minute meetings through classroom observation, semi-structured teacher interviews, teacher reflection notes, and analysis of lesson documents and game materials. The findings show that the game was implemented as a team-mediated vocabulary activity through pre-teaching, modelling, guided game turns, scaffolded oral practice, and post-game review. The game afforded contextualised vocabulary use, visual and numerical support, repeated exposure to target expressions, visible classroom participation, and opportunities for immediate teacher scaffolding. However, the teachers also faced challenges related to students' limited reading and number recognition, students' tendency to focus on game mechanics rather than English use, noisy turn-taking, unequal participation, and technical display limitations. The study implies that digital board games can support young learner vocabulary instruction when they are carefully designed around clear language targets and mediated through explicit teacher guidance. Rather than treating digital games as self-sufficient teaching tools, teachers need to integrate them with modelling, classroom routines, age-appropriate scaffolding, and focused vocabulary reinforcement.

Keywords: currency vocabulary, digital game-based learning, pedagogical affordances, teacher mediation, young EFL learners

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary learning is a basic requirement for young EFL learners because children need sufficient word knowledge before they can understand classroom instructions, recognise meanings, and participate in simple oral exchanges. In lower-primary classrooms, vocabulary teaching is usually more effective when new words are introduced through concrete objects, pictures, routines, repetition, and meaningful use rather than through abstract explanation alone.

Bakhsh (2016) argues that games can make vocabulary learning more memorable for children because they combine attention, action, and enjoyment. Similarly, Deni and Fahriany (2020) show that teachers of young learners need strategies that fit children's age, interest, and classroom behaviour. Vocabulary instruction for children should therefore help learners experience how words are used in familiar situations, not merely ask them to memorise isolated word lists.

One vocabulary topic that requires concrete and contextualised support is currency. Words and expressions such as money, price, buy, pay, coin, banknote, cheap, expensive, and change are not only lexical items but also part of everyday transactions. For second-grade learners, this topic may be cognitively demanding because it combines English vocabulary, number recognition, and basic money concepts. Lesia et al. (2022) note that English teaching in elementary school requires strategies that consider learners' developing literacy, confidence, and attention span. Andari (2023) also explains that young learners' vocabulary acquisition is influenced by age, exposure, media, and classroom support. These points indicate that currency vocabulary needs to be taught through visual, repetitive, and situation-based activities.

Game-based learning has been widely discussed as a promising approach for creating active and meaningful learning environments. Adipat et al. (2021) explain that game-based learning can engage students through rules, goals, feedback, challenge, and participation. In language learning, game elements may support vocabulary practice by encouraging repeated exposure and learner involvement. Zainuddin et al. (2020) also found that gamification and game-based elements can contribute to motivation, engagement, academic achievement, and social connection when they are pedagogically aligned. However, Hung (2022) warns that gamification should not be treated as superficial entertainment because its value depends on the relationship between game mechanics, learning objectives, and instructional design.

Research on digital game-based vocabulary learning has reported promising findings across different EFL contexts. Hazar (2020) found that digital games could make young learners' vocabulary practice more interactive than paper-based activities, while Zou et al. (2021) showed that digital game-based vocabulary learning has often been associated with vocabulary gains, motivation, interaction, and repeated exposure. Wu et al. (2020) similarly highlighted the importance of context-based and high-quality game design, and Chowdhury et al. (2024) showed that vocabulary development can be supported when elementary learners interact with words through meaningful digital tasks. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses also suggest that digital game-based and gamified language learning can contribute to vocabulary learning when game features are pedagogically designed rather than superficially added (Rahimi & Zhang, 2023; Zhang & Hasim, 2023).

Studies on specific digital tools have further shown the potential of platforms such as Wordwall, Quizizz, Kahoot!, and vocabulary learning applications. For example, Hasram et al. (2021) and Pradini and Adnyayanti (2022) reported that Wordwall supported young learners' vocabulary learning through visual prompts and interactive formats. Li (2021) found that a game-based vocabulary application influenced EFL learners' vocabulary achievement, motivation, and self-confidence, while Kazu and Kuvvetli (2023) examined digital game-based vocabulary learning through both learning outcomes and learner perceptions. More recent studies have continued to investigate Quizizz and Kahoot! in young learner vocabulary acquisition (Baissane, 2026; Nguyen et al., 2025). Taken together, these studies show that

digital games can support vocabulary practice, but many still emphasise outcomes, perceptions, or platform comparison rather than the classroom process through which the game is mediated.

A stronger implementation-focused perspective is needed because digital games do not teach by themselves. Fithriani (2020) shows that digital game-based language learning in Indonesian EFL settings is shaped by classroom realities, learner responses, and teacher decision-making. Wandana et al. (2024) also argue that implementation in developing-country contexts may be affected by digital competence, technological limitations, and the suitability of available games. From a teacher-focused perspective, Alibakhshi et al. (2025) found that teachers perceived digital video games as useful for vocabulary learning but also raised concerns about distraction and limited control over content. These findings suggest that qualitative studies are needed to explain how teachers guide digital games, how students participate during game play, and what classroom constraints shape the learning activity.

The present study addresses this gap by examining a digital Monopoly-style game adapted for teaching currency-related vocabulary to lower-primary EFL learners. The term Monopoly-style is used descriptively because the activity borrows general board-game mechanics, such as rolling dice, moving tokens, landing on squares, buying items, and paying with money. It does not refer to the commercial Monopoly product, brand, or protected visual design. The game was redesigned as an educational vocabulary activity through a digital board containing shops, item pictures, prices, digital money, question cards, and simple buying-and-paying expressions. This format is pedagogically distinctive because currency vocabulary is practised through a simulated transaction routine, not through a conventional quiz or flashcard sequence.

This study uses the concept of pedagogical affordances as an analytical lens. Krouska et al. (2022) describe pedagogical affordance as the educational possibility that emerges from the interaction between technology, learning design, and learner participation. In the present study, affordances were not treated as fixed properties of the digital board. They were examined as relational possibilities that became visible when game design features, teacher mediation, learner participation, and classroom constraints interacted. The analysis therefore focused on how the game supported or limited contextualised vocabulary use, visual and numerical support, repeated exposure, engagement, turn-taking, and teacher scaffolding. This framework also made it possible to examine challenges, because the same game features that created participation could also create distraction, noise, or unequal involvement.

Based on this gap and analytical orientation, the study investigates how a digital Monopoly-style game is implemented in teaching currency-related vocabulary to second-grade EFL learners. Unlike studies that mainly measure effectiveness or learners' perceptions, this study focuses on teacher-guided implementation, pedagogical affordances, and teacher challenges in a team-taught classroom. This focus is appropriate because second-grade learners may not yet be able to provide detailed reflective accounts of their learning experience. The study is guided by three research questions: (1) How is a digital Monopoly-style game implemented in teaching currency-related vocabulary to second-grade EFL learners? (2) What pedagogical affordances does the digital Monopoly-style game offer for teaching currency-related vocabulary to young learners? and (3) What challenges do the teachers encounter during the implementation of the digital Monopoly-style game?

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative single case study design to investigate the implementation of a digital Monopoly-style game in one second-grade EFL classroom. The case was defined as one team-taught classroom implementation of the game for teaching currency vocabulary. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because the study examined a bounded classroom practice and aimed to understand the process, affordances, and challenges of implementation in depth. Yin (2018) explains that case study research is suitable when a contemporary phenomenon is examined within its real-life context. Creswell and Poth (2018) also emphasise that qualitative case studies allow researchers to explore a case through multiple sources of information. In the present study, the bounded case was the classroom use of one digital Monopoly-style game by three teachers in the same second-grade class.

The design was not intended to test the statistical effectiveness of the game or to measure vocabulary gains. Instead, it sought to describe how the teachers prepared, mediated, and managed the game and how the classroom evidence showed both pedagogical possibilities and implementation constraints. This orientation was consistent with the research questions, which focused on implementation processes, pedagogical affordances, and teacher challenges.

Participants and Setting

The study was conducted in one second-grade English classroom at an elementary school in Indonesia. The classroom consisted of 22 students aged 8-9 years. The teacher participants were three female English teachers who team-taught the same class and were directly involved in the preparation, implementation, and reflection of the digital Monopoly-style vocabulary lesson. All three teachers held bachelor's degrees. Teacher 1 was 23 years old and had two years of teaching experience, Teacher 2 was 24 years old and had four years of teaching experience, and Teacher 3 was 28 years old and had four years of teaching experience. The students participated in the observed classroom activities, but they were not interviewed because learners at this age may have difficulty giving detailed reflective accounts of their learning experience. Their responses, participation, and difficulties were therefore examined through observation, teacher reflections, classroom documents, and student worksheets.

The teachers and class were selected purposively because the teachers were responsible for the English lesson, worked together in the same classroom, and were teaching vocabulary related to money, prices, buying, and paying as part of an everyday-life English unit. The researcher's role was that of a classroom observer and document analyst. The researcher discussed the lesson materials with the teachers before implementation but did not replace the teachers' roles during the lesson.

Instructional Material

The instructional material was a digital Monopoly-style game prepared for vocabulary instruction and reviewed with the teachers before classroom use. The term Monopoly-style refers only to general board-game mechanics and not to the use of the commercial Monopoly product. The game included a digital board, dice, tokens, shop squares, item pictures, price labels, digital banknotes, question cards, bonus squares, and challenge squares. The target vocabulary included money, coin, banknote, price, buy, pay, change, cheap, expensive, rupiah,

one thousand, two thousand, five thousand, and ten thousand. The target expressions included How much is it?, It is five thousand rupiah, I want to buy ..., Here is the money, and Thank you. The visual elements and classroom materials were prepared for educational use and were treated as instructional resources for the observed lesson sequence.

The game was projected on a classroom screen so that the teachers could guide the whole class while students took turns rolling the dice, moving the token, answering vocabulary questions, and choosing the correct digital money. The design was intended to connect item names, prices, and money expressions in a transaction-like routine. Because the participants were lower-primary learners, the game was not used as independent digital practice. It was integrated into teacher-led vocabulary instruction and supported through modelling, oral repetition, code-switching when necessary, and post-game reinforcement.

Instruments

The instruments consisted of an observation checklist, field-note format, semi-structured teacher interview guide, teacher reflection prompt, and document analysis sheet. The observation checklist focused on teaching stages, teacher modelling, vocabulary repetition, student participation, scaffolding, turn-taking, classroom management, and technical issues. Examples of observation indicators included whether the teachers modelled the target expression before game play, whether students named items or prices during their turns, whether teachers used prompts or translation, whether students waited for turns, and whether technical or display issues affected the lesson flow.

The semi-structured interview guide was organised according to the three research questions. It asked the teachers how they prepared the game, how they introduced and managed the activity, what language support students needed, what benefits they noticed, what difficulties occurred, and what they would improve in future implementation. The teacher reflection prompt asked the teachers to describe what worked well, what problems occurred, and what should be improved in the next lesson. The document analysis sheet was used to review the lesson plan, screenshots of the digital game, task cards, vocabulary cards, and students' completed worksheets.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected across six meetings, with each meeting lasting 70 minutes. First, the researcher discussed the vocabulary topic, lesson plan, and game materials with the teachers to ensure that the content, instructions, and visual elements were suitable for second-grade learners. Second, the teachers introduced the target vocabulary through pictures, price labels, and digital money. Third, the teachers modelled how to roll the digital dice, move the token, identify items, read prices, answer questions, and choose the correct digital money. Fourth, the students participated in guided game play while the researcher observed the lesson and wrote field notes. Fifth, after the lesson sequence, the three teachers completed reflection notes and participated in semi-structured interviews. Lesson documents, screenshots, game materials, and student worksheets were also collected as supporting data.

The different data sources were used to examine the same classroom case from several angles. Observation notes captured what happened during the lesson, teacher interviews and reflection notes provided the teachers' explanations of their decisions and difficulties, and

documents showed how the vocabulary tasks were designed and reinforced. Table 1 summarises the data sources and their analytic focus.

Table 1
Data sources and analytic focus

Data Source	Main Focus	Use in Analysis
Classroom observation and field notes	Teaching stages, student actions, turn-taking, teachers' prompts, classroom management, and technical issues	Identified observed evidence for implementation, affordances, and challenges
Teacher interviews	Teachers' preparation, perceived affordances, challenges, and improvement strategies	Explained teachers' decision-making and supported interpretation of classroom events
Teacher reflection notes	What worked well, what problems occurred, and what required improvement from the teachers' perspectives	Provided reflective evidence after implementation
Lesson documents, game materials, and worksheets	Vocabulary targets, game tasks, screenshots, task cards, and student worksheet responses	Checked alignment between instructional design, classroom activity, and vocabulary reinforcement

Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analysed using thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2021) explain that thematic analysis enables researchers to identify and interpret patterns of meaning across qualitative data. Kiger and Varpio (2020) also describe thematic analysis as a flexible but systematic method for organising qualitative findings. The analysis began with repeated reading of observation notes, teacher interview transcripts, teacher reflection notes, and documents. Initial codes were then generated from both the research questions and the data. Codes related to implementation included vocabulary preparation, game modelling, guided turns, teacher prompts, code-switching, and post-game review. Codes related to affordances included contextualised word use, visual and numerical support, repetition through play, visible participation, and teacher scaffolding. Codes related to challenges included number difficulty, focus on winning, noise, unequal participation, and display limitation.

After initial coding, related codes were grouped into categories and compared across data sources. For example, the category visual and numerical support was developed from observation notes showing students' use of pictures and banknotes, teacher interview comments about seeing item, price, and money together, and document analysis of the game board and worksheets. The category focus on game mechanics was developed from observations of students wanting to roll the dice quickly and teachers' reminders that students had to answer the vocabulary question first. The themes were then refined by checking whether each theme was supported by more than one data source and whether it answered the research questions.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Trustworthiness was supported through data triangulation, member checking, and detailed field notes. Observation data were compared with teacher interview responses, teacher reflection notes, and documents to identify consistent patterns. The teachers reviewed summaries of the interview interpretations to confirm whether they represented their

experiences. The use of multiple data sources also helped reduce reliance on one form of evidence. Rose and Johnson (2020) argue that qualitative rigour should be shown through transparency, contextual detail, and systematic interpretation; therefore, this study documented the research setting, instruments, procedures, and analytic steps clearly.

Ethical procedures were addressed because the study involved young children. Permission was obtained from the school, and the three teachers agreed to participate in the study. Parents or guardians provided consent for the students' classroom participation and the use of anonymised classroom data. Students' names were not used in the field notes or manuscript, and individual learners were not identified in the reporting of classroom actions, worksheet examples, or utterances. The data were used only for research purposes and were reported in a way that protected the confidentiality of the school, teachers, and students.

RESULTS

The findings are organised according to the three research questions: the implementation of the digital Monopoly-style game, its pedagogical affordances, and the challenges encountered by the teachers. The evidence was drawn from classroom observation, teacher interviews, teacher reflection notes, lesson documents, game materials, and student worksheets. The presentation distinguishes observed classroom actions from interpretation of what those actions suggested.

Implementation of the Digital Monopoly-Style Game

The implementation followed three main stages: vocabulary preparation, guided game play, and post-game reinforcement. During vocabulary preparation, the teachers introduced the target words using pictures, price labels, and digital banknotes. They modelled the pronunciation of words such as money, price, buy, pay, banknote, coin, and rupiah and connected them with simple classroom transactions. The observation notes showed that the teachers did not immediately ask students to play the game. Instead, they first demonstrated how to roll the digital dice, move the token, land on a shop square, identify an item, read a price, and choose the correct digital money.

One classroom episode illustrated the teacher-guided nature of the implementation. One of the teachers displayed the board and clicked the dice. When the token landed on the Stationery Shop square, she pointed to a pencil picture and asked, 'What is this?' Several students answered 'pencil.' She then asked, 'How much is it?' and showed Rp2,000. Students repeated, 'Two thousand rupiah.' This episode was recorded as observed evidence of vocabulary modelling, visual support, and oral repetition before students played more independently.

During guided game play, students played in turns. Each student rolled the dice, moved the token, and completed the task shown on the square. Some squares required students to name an item, while others required them to answer a price question or choose a digital banknote. When students hesitated, the teachers provided prompts. For example, when one student landed on the Food Shop square, one teacher asked, 'What is it?', 'How much is it?', and 'Can you choose five thousand rupiah?' The student first answered in Indonesian, but after teacher modelling, he repeated the expression 'It is bread. Five thousand rupiah.'

The teachers also used Indonesian selectively to explain rules and prevent confusion, but they maintained English repetition for the target vocabulary. In the interview, one teacher explained, 'For the instruction, I still needed Indonesian because they are in grade two. But for the vocabulary, I repeated the English words many times so they could remember them from the game, not only from translation.' This statement was consistent with the observation notes, which showed that Indonesian was mainly used to clarify procedure, while English was repeatedly used for naming items, asking prices, and saying money values.

At the end of the lesson sequence, the teachers reviewed the vocabulary by showing several items and prices again. Students repeated the key words, matched prices with digital banknotes, and answered short oral questions. The teachers' reflection notes indicated that this calmer reinforcement was necessary because some students became very excited during game play and needed an activity that redirected attention to the vocabulary. Document analysis of the worksheets also showed that the post-game tasks focused on matching item pictures, prices, and money values rather than simply recalling game scores. The implementation process is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2
Implementation stages of the digital Monopoly-style vocabulary lesson

Stage	Teachers' Actions	Student Activity	Observed Function
Vocabulary preparation	Introduced pictures, prices, digital money, and target expressions	Repeated words and connected pictures with meanings	Built initial vocabulary recognition
Game modelling	Demonstrated dice, token movement, shop squares, price questions, and money selection	Watched the teachers and repeated example responses	Clarified rules and reduced confusion
Guided game play	Prompted students, modelled pronunciation, used Indonesian support when needed, and controlled turn-taking	Rolled dice, moved token, named items, read prices, chose money, and repeated target expressions	Created contextual and repeated practice
Post-game review	Displayed items and prices again, asked oral questions, and used worksheet reinforcement	Repeated words, matched money with prices, and answered short questions	Reinforced vocabulary after play and refocused attention on learning targets

Pedagogical Affordances of the Game

The first pedagogical affordance was contextualised vocabulary use. The game helped place currency vocabulary in a buying-and-paying routine rather than presenting words as isolated items. Students repeatedly encountered a sequence of identifying an item, asking or answering the price, and selecting the correct money. In one teacher's words, 'Usually, when I teach money vocabulary, they only repeat the words. With this game, they see the item, the price, and the money together.' This evidence suggests that the game created a simple transaction context in which vocabulary meanings were linked to objects, prices, and payment actions.

The second affordance was visual and numerical support. The digital board displayed pictures, written words, prices, banknotes, dice, and tokens. Observation notes showed that several students could not read the written word eraser independently, but they could answer after seeing the picture. Similarly, some students forgot the English phrase five thousand but

recognised the Rp5,000 banknote and repeated the teachers' model. The worksheets also required students to connect pictures, prices, and money values, which reinforced the same multimodal association outside the game turn. These findings suggest that the multimodal design helped students connect English vocabulary with visual objects and numerical values.

The third affordance was repetition through play. The game required students to hear and produce the same expressions several times, especially How much is it? and It is ... rupiah. However, this repetition was embedded in dice movement and game turns, so it did not appear as mechanical drilling. In later turns, several students began to answer two thousand rupiah or five thousand rupiah before the teachers completed the model. One teacher perceived this as useful because, as she stated, 'They repeated the same expressions many times, but they did not complain because it was part of the game.'

The fourth affordance was visible classroom participation. Students raised their hands, watched the token movement, helped friends choose money, and responded enthusiastically to bonus and challenge squares. One observation note recorded that when the token landed on a Bonus square, many students clapped and shouted 'Bonus!' before a teacher used the moment to ask them to say one money-related word. This finding should be interpreted cautiously: it shows visible engagement and participation during the activity, but it does not by itself prove vocabulary learning gains.

The fifth affordance was immediate teacher scaffolding. The teachers could observe who answered independently, who needed a clue, and who relied on peers. They supported students through modelling, repetition, first-syllable prompts, translation, gestures, and peer assistance. For example, when a student could not say the full sentence, a teacher broke it into smaller parts: 'It is ... five thousand ... rupiah.' This allowed students to participate even when they could not yet produce complete sentences independently. The affordance therefore emerged not only from the digital board but also from the teachers' mediation of each game turn.

Teacher Challenges During Implementation

The teachers encountered several challenges. The first challenge was students' limited reading and number recognition. Some students could identify pictures but struggled to read the written English words. Others recognised the rupiah amount visually but could not say the number in English. One teacher explained that the currency topic was difficult because 'the students need to understand money and English numbers at the same time.' This challenge required repeated modelling, simplified price variations, and additional support through pictures and banknotes.

The second challenge was students' tendency to focus on playing rather than using English. Some students wanted to roll the dice quickly, move tokens, or reach reward squares without completing the language task. One observation note recorded that a student tried to click the dice again before answering the price question, and a teacher reminded him, 'Answer first. How much is it?' To manage this, the teachers created a rule that students had to say the word or expression before the next turn. This rule helped connect the game mechanic to the language objective.

The third challenge was classroom management. The game increased excitement, but this sometimes resulted in noise, impatience, and difficulty in turn-taking. Several students stood near the screen because they wanted to see the token more clearly, while others called out

answers before their turn. The teachers reflected that clearer group roles were needed so that students knew when to answer, when to help, and when to wait. This challenge shows that engagement needed to be organised through routines, not simply encouraged.

The fourth challenge was unequal participation. Confident students often answered loudly, while quieter students tended to point, repeat, or wait for help. The teachers recognised that different forms of participation should be accepted in a second-grade classroom. One teacher stated, 'Not all students can speak directly. Some only point or repeat, but from that I know they still need support.' This suggests that young learners' participation should not be evaluated only through full oral production. Pointing, choosing money, repeating a model, and responding with one word were also meaningful early forms of involvement.

The final challenge was technical and display limitation. Some price labels were too small for students sitting at the back, and the teachers needed to enlarge the board during the lesson. Operating the laptop while managing the class also required extra attention. The teachers reported that preparing the digital board, pictures, prices, and money took more time than preparing ordinary flashcards. These findings show that the digital format created useful learning opportunities but also demanded technical preparation and classroom control. Table 3 summarises the main affordances and challenges identified across the data sources.

Table 3
Pedagogical affordances and implementation challenges

Focus	Main Theme	Evidence from Data
Affordance	Contextualised vocabulary use	Students used item names, prices, and money expressions in buying-and-paying routines
Affordance	Visual and numerical support	Pictures, price labels, banknotes, and worksheets helped students infer meaning
Affordance	Repetition through play	Target expressions were repeated across game turns without being presented as mechanical drilling
Affordance	Visible participation	Students raised hands, watched token movement, helped peers, and responded to bonus or challenge squares
Affordance	Immediate teacher scaffolding	Teachers used modelling, prompts, translation, gestures, and peer support during student turns
Challenge	Limited reading and number recognition	Students confused written words and price expressions and needed repeated modelling
Challenge	Focus on game mechanics	Some students wanted to continue playing before answering in English
Challenge	Classroom management and unequal participation	Excitement created noise, impatience, turn-taking issues, and domination by confident students
Challenge	Technical/display limitation	Small price labels and laptop control affected the lesson flow

DISCUSSION

The findings show that the digital Monopoly-style game was implemented as a teacher-guided vocabulary task rather than as free play. The teachers introduced vocabulary, modelled the game, guided turns, scaffolded responses, and reviewed the target words after the activity. This supports Hung's (2022) argument that gamification must be connected to instructional goals rather than added only for enjoyment. It also aligns with Adipat et al. (2021), who emphasise that game-based learning requires purposeful rules, goals, and feedback. In this study, the pedagogical value of the game emerged because the teachers continuously connected each game move with a language task.

The implementation also confirms that young learners need structured support before and during digital game activities. The teachers' use of pictures, repetition, modelling, and selective Indonesian explanation helped students understand both the vocabulary and the game procedure. This finding extends Deni and Fahriany's (2020) view that vocabulary instruction for young learners should be adapted to children's characteristics and classroom needs. It also supports Lesia et al. (2022), who highlight the importance of age-appropriate strategies in elementary English teaching. For second-grade learners, the game could not stand alone; it required teacher mediation to make the learning goal visible.

One major affordance of the game was its ability to contextualise currency vocabulary. Instead of learning money words separately, students used them in a buying-and-paying sequence. This supports Zou et al. (2021), who explain that digital game-based vocabulary learning can be effective when learners encounter words through meaningful interaction and repeated exposure. The finding also resonates with Wu et al. (2020), who argue that context-based game design is important for vocabulary learning. In the present study, the board-game structure created a simple transaction context that helped students connect item names, prices, and money expressions.

The game also offered multimodal support through pictures, numbers, written words, banknotes, dice, and tokens. This finding is consistent with Hasram et al. (2021) and Pradini and Adnyayanti (2022), who found that online vocabulary games can support young learners through visual and interactive features. However, this study adds that visual support was not merely decorative. It helped students compensate for limited reading ability and supported their understanding of price and money vocabulary. The digital board therefore functioned as a multimodal vocabulary environment in which meaning was supported by visual, verbal, and numerical cues.

Another important affordance was repetition through play. Students repeatedly heard and produced expressions such as How much is it? and It is five thousand rupiah, but the repetition occurred through game turns rather than through mechanical drills. This supports Vnučko and Klimova's (2023) conclusion that digital game-based vocabulary learning can provide repeated exposure through challenge and interaction. It also supports Chowdhury et al. (2024), who show that vocabulary development can be supported when digital game tasks involve repeated engagement with word meanings. For young learners, this type of repetition is valuable because it can maintain attention while reinforcing language forms.

At the same time, the findings show that engagement needs cautious interpretation. Students were eager to take turns, answer questions, and help peers, which is consistent with studies reporting positive roles of digital games in vocabulary learning and learner engagement

(Baissane, 2026; Hazar, 2020; Kazu & Kuvvetli, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2025). However, this study did not administer vocabulary pre-tests or post-tests. Therefore, excitement, laughter, and competition should be interpreted as evidence of visible participation and classroom engagement, not as proof of vocabulary improvement. Engagement became pedagogically meaningful only when the teachers redirected students' attention to vocabulary use. This point supports Zainuddin et al. (2020), who argue that game elements need to be meaningfully aligned with learning objectives.

The challenges also show that game mechanics can compete with language learning if teachers do not set clear rules. Some students focused on rolling dice and moving tokens rather than answering in English. This supports Alibakhshi et al. (2025), who found that teachers value digital games but remain concerned about distraction and control. In this case, the teachers required students to give an English response before the next move. This indicates that teachers need explicit language-use rules to prevent game mechanics from overtaking learning objectives.

The challenges related to reading and number recognition are particularly important for currency vocabulary. Because the topic involved English words, numbers, prices, and money values, students needed to process language and numeracy at the same time. This finding shows that vocabulary tasks for lower-primary learners may become cognitively demanding when they combine lexical, visual, and numerical information. Therefore, teachers should limit the number of target words and price variations at the beginning of the lesson. As Andari (2023) explains, young learners' vocabulary acquisition is shaped by exposure, media, and support; the present study adds that numerical complexity should also be considered when teaching currency vocabulary.

Classroom management and unequal participation further show that digital games are not automatically learner-centred. Some confident students dominated, while quieter students participated by pointing, repeating, or choosing money. This finding is consistent with Fithriani (2020), who notes that digital game-based language learning is shaped by classroom realities and teacher decision-making. It also supports Wandana et al. (2024), who argue that implementation in developing-country contexts can be affected by practical and technological constraints. In this study, the teachers needed to manage turns, noise, display visibility, and student support while also operating the digital board.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the discussion of pedagogical affordances in digital game-based language learning. Krouska et al. (2022) explain that affordances emerge from the interaction between technology, design, and participation. The present findings extend this view by showing that affordances were also shaped by teacher mediation and classroom constraints. The game's affordances were not inherent in the digital board alone. They emerged when the teachers used the board to model language, create transaction routines, repeat expressions, invite participation, and scaffold responses. Therefore, affordance should be understood as relational: the same game may offer different learning possibilities depending on game design, teacher mediation, learner participation, and classroom constraints.

Practically, the findings imply that teachers who use digital board games with young learners should begin with a small vocabulary set, use large and clear visuals, model target expressions repeatedly, and connect every game move with a language task. Teachers also need clear turn-taking rules, peer-support roles, and backup materials in case of technical problems.

For second-grade learners, the goal should not be immediate independent sentence production. Pointing, choosing, repeating, and producing one-word answers can be treated as early forms of participation that may later develop into short expressions with support..

CONCLUSION

This study examined the implementation of a digital Monopoly-style game in teaching currency-related vocabulary to second-grade EFL learners, focusing on pedagogical affordances and teacher challenges. The findings show that the game was implemented as a teacher-guided vocabulary activity through preparation, modelling, guided game play, scaffolding, and post-game reinforcement. The game afforded contextualised vocabulary use, visual and numerical support, repeated exposure to words and expressions, visible classroom participation, and opportunities for immediate teacher scaffolding.

The study also found that implementation involved several challenges. Students had limited reading and number recognition, sometimes focused more on game mechanics than English use, and showed unequal participation. Classroom noise, turn-taking, screen visibility, and technical preparation also affected the lesson. These findings suggest that digital board games are not automatically effective; they become pedagogically meaningful when teachers connect game actions with language objectives and provide continuous, age-appropriate support.

The main contribution of this study is not to prove the general effectiveness of digital Monopoly-style games, but to explain how three teachers mediated a digital board game for vocabulary instruction in one lower-primary EFL classroom. The study highlights the relational nature of pedagogical affordances: the educational value of the game depended on the interaction between game design, teacher mediation, learner participation, and classroom constraints. For classroom practice, teachers are encouraged to simplify game rules, limit target vocabulary, enlarge visual elements, model expressions clearly, and accept gradual forms of young learners' participation.

This study is limited to one team-taught classroom, three teachers, 22 students, and one vocabulary topic. The findings therefore cannot be generalised to all young learner EFL contexts. Future studies may investigate similar digital board games across different grade levels, vocabulary topics, and school contexts. Further research may also combine qualitative classroom analysis with students' vocabulary outcomes to examine both the implementation process and learning results of digital game-based vocabulary instruction.

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